



State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives
403 Seventh Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0312

**TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAY MARKERS
RECORDS
1921-1967**

RECORD GROUP 74

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INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee State Historical Commission consists of 24 members appointed by the Governor and five ex-officio members; the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the State Librarian and Archivist, the State Historian and the State Archaeologist.

The Historical Commission was founded in 1919 by the 61st General Assembly. Senate Joint Resolution Number 12 was introduced by Republican Senators John C. Hook and E.E. Patton, both of Knox County; for the purpose of collecting and preserving military records of Tennesseans serving in World War I.

Senate Bill 164, passed in 1921, further defined the membership of the Commission, and provided for the publication of books and documents on Tennessee History, as well as giving it the power to establish monuments at historic sites.

In 1951, Senate Bill 1107 Section 5 authorized the Commission to publish a history of Tennessee

The 81st General Assembly, in Senate Bill 273, authorized the Historical Commission to Evaluate, acquire and preserve the historic John Sevier home in Knox County. This act, passed in 1959 made Tennessee one of the first states to actively begin a preservation program on its historic sites.

After the National Historic Preservation Act of 1969 by Congress, the State Historical Commission began to actively search for sites worthy of restoration and preservation.

In 1971 the 86th General Assembly passed House Bill 49, which set terms for commission members to be until age 75, not for life as it was set previously.

In addition to its other duties, the Tennessee State Historical Commission participates in a scholarship program for outstanding students of Tennessee history, organized seminars and conferences, trains capital tour guides, publishes The Courier newsletter, sponsors the research on the Andrew Johnson Papers, and has published a biographic directory of the Tennessee General Assembly from 1796 to 1969.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Tennessee State Historical Commission was founded in 1919 by the 61st General Assembly, Senate Joint Resolution Number 12; to collect and preserve military records of Tennesseans in World War I.

Legislative Acts in 1921, 1951, 1959 and 1971 defined commission membership and expanded its areas of responsibility to include the evaluation, acquisition and preservation of historic sites, the compilation of a Tennessee register of historic places, the selection and erection of Tennessee historical markers and the publication of books and documents on Tennessee history.

The Tennessee State Historical Commission consists of 24 members, appointed by the Governor, the five ex-officio members; the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the State Librarian and Archivist, the State Historian and the State Archaeologist.

This record group consists entirely of the records of the Division of Highway Markers. It covers this division from its inception in 1950 until 1967, though the majority of the records confine themselves to the period of Colonel Campbell H. Brown's directorship, 1950-1956. There are a few letters dating from the years 1921 to 1949.

During this period the division was responsible for the placement of roadside historical markers at over 1,200 sites throughout Tennessee.

Of special interest are the numerous letters nominating sites for historical markers. These nominations and the numerous letters of rejection make up the bulk of the record group. This group is arranged by geographically, by division, and chronologically. It is of special interest that nominations for proposed historical highway markers were presented as early as 1921.

Another area of special importance is the files of samples from marker manufacturers. There is a large group of business correspondence, order and invoices from Sewah Studios, Marietta, Ohio, the company that was eventually awarded the contract for road markers.

This record group also contains marker guides, marker guide mailing lists, publicity notices and financial records.

ORGANIZATION SKETCH

- 1919 The Tennessee State Historical Commission was founded to collect and preserve military records of Tennesseans serving in World War I.
- 1921 The General Assembly further defined the membership of the Commission, provided for the publication of books and documents on Tennessee history, and gave it the power to establish monuments.
- 1950 The Tennessee State Historical Commission began its program of placing historical road markers throughout the state.
- 1951 The General Assembly authorized the Commission to publish a history of Tennessee
- 1957 The Commission began a biographical directory of the General Assembly from the year 1796.
- 1959 The General Assembly authorized the acquisition and preservation of the John Sevier home in Knox County.
- 1969 The National Historic Preservation Act of 1969, passed by Congress required the State Historic Commission to establish a register of historic places, and to begin plans for restoring and preserving these historic places.
- 1971 The Tennessee State Historical Commission was authorized to begin the training of capital tour guides.
- 1972 The Commission published Volume III of The Papers of Andrew Jackson, a project they had sponsored from its inception.
- 1973 The Historical Commission began its series of conferences and seminars on local history and historic preservation.
- 1974 The Commission began its scholarship program for outstanding students in Tennessee History.

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